



APPLICATIONS MATCH STUDY

A Perspective on Unmet Demand

Fall 2005

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THE DEMAND FOR HIGHER EDUCATION may be separated into two components: (1) the actual enrollment, and (2) unmet demand. The **enrollment** projections are based upon population forecasts by age and sex under the assumption that participation rates will remain at the current levels. If budget constraints did not limit enrollment, this projection alone would represent expected demand for higher education. However, participation rates have been limited by budget constraints since the early 1980s and by enrollment lids until fiscal year 1994.¹ Potential **unmet demand** is assessed through the applications match process, which matches applicants to Washington public four-year institutions with registered students in Washington public and independent higher education institutions. This study focuses on **undergraduate applicants** only.

The Applications Match Study

The goal of the **Applications Match Study** is to obtain an unduplicated count of qualified individuals applying to Washington public four-year higher education institutions at the undergraduate level who were not served by the higher education system of the state. The study is designed to provide a more accurate account of unserved applicants than can be obtained by adding the numbers of qualified applicants who are denied admission by the individual institutions. The single institutional perspective does not adjust for multiple applications by individual students; nor does it account for students denied admission by one institution, but admitted and served by another; nor does it distinguish between Washington residents and out-of-state applicants.

An applications match study has been conducted annually since Fall 1987. Between 1990-91 and 2000-01, data were collected for fall, winter, and spring terms. This allowed for a follow-up component of the study, which examined applicants for an entire academic year and assessed their application and enrollment status through the following academic year. The most recent analysis of full-year data is available for applicants for 1999-2000, following them through the 2000-01 academic year. This study is available at the Office of Financial Management website.² Beginning with the Fall 2002 study, fall applications only have been analyzed.

Limitations

Non-applicants or incomplete applications. Applications to higher education institutions are only one measure of demand for higher education, although they are still the most concrete and objective indicator available. Other forms of demand are not fully captured by applications data, such as individuals who fail to submit applications to four-year institutions because they lack the financial resources or other support services needed to attend. Examination of applicant and enrollment data provides a measure of unmet need among Washington residents who have taken the step of applying to a four-year institution. Persons who do not submit an application because they lack the resources to participate in higher education, or who believe they will not be admitted due to enrollment limits, are not counted by this measure of unmet need. Persons who do not submit a complete application are also not counted by this measure of unmet need.

Applicants not admitted to institution of first choice. In this study, any applicant who is admitted to a four-year higher education institution is considered to be served by the higher education system of the state, whether the person actually enrolls or not. Some would suggest that unless an applicant is enrolled by his/her first-choice institution, the applicant is not completely served by the system. Applicants' priorities are not recorded in any administrative databases; they have not been a factor in determining whether an applicant has been served by the state's higher education system.

Applicants attending out-of-state institutions. Just as Washington higher education institutions serve many out-of-state residents, many Washington residents leave the state for their post-secondary education. Undoubtedly, many of the applicants who apply to in-state institutions, but never enroll, are attending institutions outside of Washington.

Data Elements

As in the past, application and registration data were requested and received from all public four-year institutions. Registration data from independent colleges and universities³ and from community colleges were also used in the study. This study focuses on undergraduate applicants, i.e., applicants from high school, transfer applicants from two- and four-year institutions, returning undergraduate students, and other applicants not applying for graduate or professional study. For each applicant to public four-year institutions, information related to all applications and to enrollment status was developed. Social security number, name, and birth date were the basis of the matching procedure. Extreme care was taken to avoid any inappropriate matches.

An applicant's ***county of permanent residence*** is the county of permanent residence captured at the time of application and stored in the enrollment file, if the applicant was enrolled in a four-year institution. If the applicant did not subsequently enroll, a county code based upon city, state, and ZIP code of permanent residence at the time of application was used. In the absence of city and state information, the location of the last school attended and the date of last attendance were used to identify Washington residents.

Applicants were classified as "***accepted***" if they were admitted to at least one public four-year institution. They were classified as "***denied***" if they were denied admission to at least one public four-year institution and were not admitted by any other. If an applicant was neither admitted nor denied, but instead withdrew an application, submitted an incomplete application, or if the admission status was not provided by the institution, the applicant's admission status was classified as "***other***."

Status of Applicants for Fall 2005 – Undergraduate Applicants

There were 52,928 undergraduate applicants, who submitted 68,322 applications to public four-year higher education institutions in Washington State for Fall 2005. The subsequent status of these applicants is outlined in Table 1 along with a time series of equivalent data.

- Of the 38,317 Washington resident applicants for Fall 2005, 24,512 were enrolled at one of the public or independent four-year higher education institutions in Washington during Fall 2005. An additional 4,209 were enrolled in a community college during Fall 2005.
- A total of 9,596 Washington resident applicants for Fall 2005 were not enrolled in any of the higher education institutions involved in this study during Fall 2005.
- Of the 9,596 Washington resident applicants for Fall 2005 not enrolled during Fall 2005, 5,366 were offered admission to a public four-year institution for Fall 2005. These applicants are

considered to be served by the higher education system. Undoubtedly, many of these applicants enrolled in out-of-state institutions. The most recent student migration studies conducted by NCES⁴ for Fall 2002 indicate that over 5,700 Washington resident freshmen enrolled in out-of-state institutions.

- Application information provided for 2,276 of the non-enrolled Washington resident applicants for Fall 2005 indicated admission status unknown, a withdrawn application, an incomplete application, or that no admissions decision had been made as of the tenth class day of the fall term. These applications have been excluded from the analysis.
- Finally, 1,954 of the non-enrolled Washington resident applicants for Fall 2005 were denied admission by at least one public four-year institution and not admitted by any other for Fall 2005. Of these, 1,408 were known to have a grade point average (GPA) or admissions index (AI) acceptable for admission to a Washington four-year institution and 408 had GPAs or AIs lower than the minimum acceptable level. The GPA and AI for 138 of these applicants are unknown. Some of these 138 applicants may have had acceptable GPAs or AIs.⁵

Results of the analysis indicate that for Fall 2005 between 1,408 and 1,546 qualified individuals were denied admission to a public four-year institution and not enrolled in any other public or private Washington higher education institution during that same term.

Table 1: Fall Undergraduate Applications/Applicants to Washington Public Four-Year Institutions

	Fall 1996	Fall 1997	Fall 1998	Fall 1999	Fall 2000	Fall 2001	Fall 2002	Fall 2003	Fall 2004	Fall 2005
Undergraduate Applications	54,859	53,456	55,362	54,870	57,752	59,863	64,529	65,921	66,758	68,322
Individuals:	44,204	44,164	45,147	44,468	47,772	49,515	51,936	52,460	52,409	52,928
Washington residents:	31,794	31,730	32,984	32,827	34,307	34,843	36,242	37,145	37,777	38,317
Registered four-year, Fall	21,605	21,489	22,197	22,309	22,963	23,320	23,348	24,038	24,478	24,512
Registered two-year ⁶ , Fall	3,269	2,986	3,118	2,719	3,303	3,406	3,824	3,991	3,839	4,209
Did not register, Fall:	6,920	7,255	7,669	7,799	8,041	8,117	9,070	9,116	9,460	9,596
Accepted	5,015	4,864	5,180	4,919	5,106	5,100	5,119	5,173	5,164	5,366
Other	910	1,294	1,336	1,611	1,689	1,831	2,079	1,966	2,168	2,276
Denied admission:	995	1,097	1,153	1,269	1,246	1,186	1,872	1,977	2,128	1,954
Low GPA or AI	182	181	218	274	234	211	341	265	275	408
Unknown GPA and/or AI	110	162	164	143	219	154	441	471	211	138
Acceptable GPA or AI	703	754	771	852	793	821	1,090	1,241	1,642	1,408
Unserved (excludes unknown GPA/AI)	703	754	771	852	793	821	1,090	1,241	1,642	1,408
Unserved (includes unknown GPA/AI)	813	916	935	995	1,012	975	1,531	1,712	1,853	1,546

Table 2 provides additional detail for the Fall 2005 unserved undergraduate applicants, with breakouts for applicants entering from high school, transfers from two-year colleges, and transfers from four-year institutions (including returning students). The transfer categories are based upon information provided by the individual institutions. Transfer applicants from two-year institutions do not necessarily hold an associate's degree.

Table 2: Fall 2005 Applications/Applicants to Washington Public Four-Year Institutions, By Type

	Undergraduate Applicants (Total)	Entering from High School	Two-Year Transfers	Four-Year Transfers	Other*
Applications	68,322	44,306	13,435	6,804	3,777
Individuals:	52,928	31,529	11,279	6,422	3,698
Washington residents:	38,317	21,091	9,850	4,750	2,626
Registered four-year, Fall	24,512	13,347	6,958	3,031	1,176
Registered two-year, Fall	4,209	2,398	969	414	428
Did not register, Fall:	9,596	5,346	1,923	1,305	1,022
Accepted	5,366	3,350	1,019	686	311
Other	2,276	854	495	402	525
Denied admission:	1,954	1,142	409	217	186
Low GPA or AI	408	308	33	12	55
Unknown GPA and/or AI	138	20	62	48	8
Acceptable GPA or AI	1,408	814	314	157	123
Unserved (excludes unknown GPA/AI)	1,408	814	314	157	123
Unserved (includes unknown GPA/AI)	1,546	834	376	205	131

*The category "Other" includes applicants classified as special and fifth year plus applicants where the application type is unknown.

Interpretation of Results for Fall 2005 Analysis

Not all of the potentially unserved applicants (the "Waiting Line") are necessarily unserved.

- Some applicants may be attending institutions outside Washington or one of the independent institutions within the state for which no enrollment data are available.
- Many applicants denied admission for a fall term are admitted in subsequent terms. Between Fall 1991 and Fall 1999, approximately 60 percent of qualified undergraduate applicants to public higher education institutions denied admission for a fall term enrolled or were admitted in subsequent terms.²
- Since approximately 40 percent of all individuals admitted to a four-year institution never enroll, it is likely that some of these applicants would not enroll even if accepted.

The "waiting line" as indicated by unserved applicants should not be interpreted as a measure of total unmet need for higher education. Persons who may lack the resources to attend a four-year institution, for example, and those who do not submit a complete application, are not counted among the unserved.

Unserved Applicants by Institution, Fall 2005

Table 3 shows the breakout of the 1,546 unserved applicants for Fall 2005 by institution and by application type. "Multiple" indicates that the applicants were denied admission by more than one institution.

Table 3: Fall 2005 Unserved Undergraduate Applicants by Institution and by Application Type

	UWS*	UWB*	UWT*	UWE*	WWU	WSU	CWU	EWU	TESC	Multiple ⁷	Total
High School	362	0	0	0	262	73	0	10	0	127	834
Two-year Transfer	94	22	24	2	187	24	0	1	10	12	376
Four-year Transfer	86	4	8	0	90	5	0	1	5	6	205
Other	52	2	2	0	0	7	0	67	0	1	131
Total	594	28	34	2	539	109	0	79	15	146	1,546

*UWS: UW-Seattle; UWB: UW-Bothell; UWT: UW-Tacoma; UWE: UW Evening Degree Program

- Applicants to the University of Washington and to Western Washington University account for over 70 percent of the total unserved undergraduate applicants for Fall 2005.
- Applicants entering from high school account for over half of the total unserved undergraduate applicants for Fall 2005.
- Since Fall 1993, higher education institutions have been allowed to enroll students above the number of budgeted FTEs if, in their judgment, the additional students could be accommodated without harming the quality of education. For institutions enrolling more than the number of budgeted FTEs, the “waiting line” is probably smaller than it would have been otherwise.

Endnotes

- ¹ In 1993 1st Special Session Washington Laws: “Each institution shall enroll to its budgeted biennial average FTEs, plus four percent or minus two percent. ... [A]n amount equal to the student quality standard multiplied by the number of FTE students above or below the variances shall revert to state general fund.” This language was removed effective Fiscal Year 1994.
- ² See “Applications Match Study: A Perspective on Unmet Demand,” State of Washington, Office of Financial Management, March 2002. Available at <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/hied/appmat/>.
- ³ Independent institutions providing enrollment data for Fall 2005 were Gonzaga University, Heritage University, Pacific Lutheran University, St. Martin’s University, Seattle Pacific University, Seattle University, University of Puget Sound, Walla Walla College, Whitman College, Whitworth College.
- ⁴ U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. *Digest of Education Statistics 2004*, NCES 2006005, by Thomas Snyder and Alexandra G. Tan. Table 204. (http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d04/tables/dt04_204.asp)
- ⁵ The Higher Education Coordinating Board sets minimum standards for admission to the four-year public higher education institutions in Washington. Students admitted to the University of Washington or to Washington State University must have an admissions index of 28; students admitted to one of the regional institutions must have an admissions index number of at least 13. For transfer students, a minimum grade point average for prior college work is 2.00 was used to define a “qualified” applicant in this study.
- ⁶ Data for the state’s five technical colleges, the former vocational-technical institutes, were included in this study beginning in Fall 1997.
- ⁷ The 146 unserved undergraduate applicants submitting applications to more than one institution submitted applications in the following combinations: 70 to UWS-WWU; 32 to WSU-WWU; 13 to UWS-WSU; 11 to WSU-EWU; 9 to UWS-WSU-WWU; 2 each to UWB-WWU, WWU-EWU, and WSU-WWU-EWU; and 1 each to UWS-UWB, UWS-UWT, UWS-EWU, UWS-WSU-WWU-EWU, and UWB-UWE.